

Message Text

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PAGE 01 USUN N 01836 092336Z

ACTION IO-14

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CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00
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C O N F I D E N T I A L USUN 1836

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, UNGA, UN, CU, EQ, US

SUBJECT: COMMITTEE OF 24 (C-24) CONSIDERATION OF PUERTO RICO

REF: USUN 1803

1. PLOCOUNS CALLED ON NORWEGIAN MINISTER VRAALSEN JUNE 9 TO DISCUSS OUR TACTICS AND APPROACH TO THIS YEAR'S CONSIDERATION OF PUERTO RICO BY THE COMMITTEE OF 24 (C-24). THE DISCUSSION REMAINED AT A GENERAL PLANE AND UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES WE CHOSE NOT TO LEAVE WITH VRAALSEN A SUGGESTED TEXT FOR A DRAFT STATEMENT ON PUERTO RICO (REFTEL PARA 6).

2. VRAALSEN SAID HE HAS BEEN IN SEVERAL PRELIMINARY CONVERSATIONS WITH CUBAN PERM REP ALARCON. VRAALSEN HAS THE STRONG IMPRESSION THAT CUBA WOULD LIKE TO EXPLORE WHETHER A FORMULA CAN BE FOUND AGAIN THIS YEAR TO AVOID A CONFRONTATION OVER PUERTO RICO. CUBA, OF COURSE, FEELS THAT IT MUST PROTECT ITS "CREDENTIALS" WITH THE NON-ALIGNED, IN LIGHT OF CUBA'S PAST RECORD OF CONCERN ABOUT PUERTO RICO. WHATEVER FORMULA FOR FINESSING THE PROBLEM AGAIN THIS YEAR IS DEvised, THEREFORE, CUBA WILL REQUIRE SOME "FACE-SAVING" ELEMENT.

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 USUN N 01836 092336Z

3. VRAALSEN SAID IT IS HIS IMPRESSION THAT THE CUBANS HAVE NOT AS YET REACHED A DECISION WHETHER TO PRESS THE PUERTO RICAN CASE AGAIN THIS YEAR. IN PART THIS IS BECAUSE THE TIME IS STILL EARLY, RECENT U.S. STATEMENTS HAVE RAISED UNCERTAINTY AS TO THE U.S. POSITION ON THE ISSUE THIS YEAR, AND THE INTERNAL POLITICAL SITUATION WITHIN PUERTO RICO HAS CHANGED SINCE THE 1976 ELECTION AND REMAINS UNCLEAR

TO THE CUBANS. CUBA'S HESITATION MAINLY RELATES TO ITS INTEREST IN DEVELOPMENTS IN BILATERAL RELATIONS WITH THE U.S., HOWEVER ALARCON PROBABLY WILL, DEPART NEW YORK THIS WEEKEND FOR HAVANA, HOWEVER, AND VRAALSEN UNDERSTANDS THAT PUERTO RICO IS ONE OF THE SUBJECTS ON WHICH ALARCON WILL BE CONSULTED.

4. VRAALSEN RAN OVER RECENT STATEMENTS BY U.S. OFFICIALS AND ASKED WHETHER THEY REFLECT ANY CHANGE IN THE U.S. POSITION. HE SAID HE PLANNED TO TALK WITH ALARCON ONE MORE TIME BEFORE ALARCON'S DEPARTURE AND WOULD LIKE TO THROW OUT A PRELIMINARY SUGGESTION OF A FORMULA FOR FINESSING THE ISSUE THIS YEAR. VRAALSEN SAID HE PERSONALLY HAS FOUND NO READY ANSWER TO THE PROBLEM IN HIS REVIEW OF THE PAST RECORDS OF C-24 CONSIDERATION OF PUERTO RICO. HE URGED THAT THE USG GIVE SOME THOUGHT TO A POSSIBLE FORMULA THAT MIGHT BE OFFERED THE CUBANS, BEARING IN MIND BOTH CUBA'S APPARENT DESIRE TO "COOPERATE" WITHIN LIMITS AND CUBA'S REQUIREMENT FOR SOME "FACE-SAVING" ELEMENT IN THE STATEMENT. VRAALSEN SAID THE ONLY IDEA THAT HAS OCCURRED TO HIM WOULD BE REVIVAL OF THE PROCEDURAL HANDLING OF THE ISSUE IN 1972, WHEN THE C-24 VOTED TO ESTABLISH A WORKING GROUP TO CONSIDER THE PROBLEM OF PROCEDURE FOR HANDLING PUERTO RICO WITH AN INSTRUCTION THAT THE WORKING GROUP REPORT BACK TO THE COMMITTEE. THAT FORMULA IN 1972-1973 PRODUCED NO SUBSTANTIVE PROGRESS ON THE ISSUE, BUT IT SUCCESSFULLY BOUGHT ANOTHER YEAR'S TIME. VRAALSEN SAID HE DOUBTED THAT CUBA WOULD ACCEPT SUCH A SUGGESTION THIS YEAR, BUT IT EXEMPLIFIES THE KIND OF THING FOR WHICH VRAALSEN IS SEARCHING.

CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 USUN N 01836 092336Z

5. VRAALSEN SAID HE WOULD OF COURSE HAVE TO SEEK THE INSTRUCTION OF HIS GOVERNMENT IF NORWAY WERE AGAIN TO SERVE IN A MEDIATORY ROLE THIS YEAR. HE SAID HE WAS CONFIDENT THAT HIS GOVERNMENT WOULD BE GLAD TO HAVE HIM FUNCTION AGAIN IN THIS WAY. WE TOLD HIM THAT OUR PRESENT THINKING IS THAT WE WOULD LIKE TO WORK WITH HIM IN SEEKING A RESOLUTION OF THE C-24 DISCUSSION ON THE SAME PATTERN AS LAST YEAR.

6. VRAALSEN AGREED THAT IT WOULD BE USEFUL FOR THE U.S. TO TAKE ITS OWN SOUNDINGS IN THE CAPITAL OF C-24 MEMBERS. HE ADVISED AGAINST ANY STRONG LOBBYING EFFORT, AT LEAST AT THIS STAGE, BUT AGREED THAT A LOW-KEY EFFORT TO RAISE THE SUBJECT IN THE CAPITALS AND SEEK THE CURRENT THINKING OF THE GOVERNMENTS AT THIS TIME WOULD BE HELPFUL. HE THOUGHT IT BARELY POSSIBLE THAT A SUGGESTION OF A FORMULA MIGHT EVEN EMERGE FROM SUCH QUIET DISCUSSIONS. VRAALSEN SAID WE WOULD PICK UP OUR DISCUSSION WITH PUERTO RICO AGAIN IN EARLY AUGUST, WHEN ALL OF THE PLAYERS RETURN TO NEW YORK TO START PRE-

PARING FOR THE C-24 MEETING.

7. COMMENT: WE AGREE WITH VRAALSEN THAT IT PROBABLY WOULD BE COUNTER PRODUCTIVE TO INITIATE SERIOUS LOBBYING AT THIS TIME. WE CONTINUE TO FEEL, HOWEVER, THAT IT WOULD BE USEFUL TO PUT DOWN OUR MARKER WITH C-24 MEMBER GOVERNMENTS IN THE CAPITALS AND GET A CURRENT IMPRESSION OF MEMBERSHIP ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE ISSUE THIS YEAR. WE SUGGEST THAT THE DEPARTMENT GO AHEAD WITH APPROACHES IN THE CAPITALS ALONG THESE LINES.

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